Mimulus Memo

California Native Plant Society
KERN CHAPTER

JANUARY 2019

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EVENTS

JANUARY

17 – Annual Potluck, 6-7 pm
Program 7-8 pm

FEBRUARY

21 – Chapter Meeting, 6pm
Program, 7pm

MARCH

16 - Field Trip, Desert Tortoise Research Natural Area
21 – Chapter Meeting, 6pm
Program, 7pm
30 - Field Trip, Kern National Wildlife Refuge

APRIL

18 – Chapter Meeting, 6pm
Program, 7pm
13 - Local Garden Tours
20 - Garden Fest - Bakersfield College

President's Message
Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation: Invasive v. Native Species

by Richard Spjut

RECENTLY, OUR CONSERVATION CO-CHAIRS, **LUCY CLARK** AND **Fred Chynoweth**, and I expressed our chapter's and CNPS's opposition to off-highway-vehicle (OHV) recreation in **Red Rock Canyon State Park** at a scoping meeting held in Ridgecrest, in writing, and via email letter, to the **California Department of Parks and Recreation**. This was in regard to their proposed revision of the Park's **1982 General Plan,** that we suspect would lead to more OHV recreation in the park.

One of many negative impacts of OHV recreation is the introduction of invasive species that replace the native blooms that we all look forward to seeing after fall-winter rain.[1] An example is the invasive Sahara mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*).

The photo at left was taken in March 2005 from Hwy. 62 along the San Bernardino/RiversidCounty line — looking north towards the Iron Mountains. The lighter green in the foreground is Sahara mustard, contrasting with darker green native creosote bush nearer the mountains. The rather even spacing between mustard plants is likely due to **allelopathy**, when the roots leaching harmful chemicals into the soil signal neighboring plants to stay away. This phenomenon probably relates to the amount of water needed to sustain the growth of each mustard plant. It also means there is no water for natives, except perhaps the occasional white-flowered desert primrose (*Oenothera deltoidea*).[2] This kind of invasion is an example of what could happen to Red Rock Canyon State Park if OHV recreation expands there, and of what has already occurred in nearby Jawbone Canyon, as described below.

In the aerial image on the right, reproduced from Google Earth, the blue circles outline the approximate areas where the invasive Sahara mustard was photographed in March 2005 — in a southern California transition area between the Mojave and Sonoran deserts — not only by me but also

Top: *Amsinckia* alliance in the Temblor Range, March 23, 2010
Bottom: *A. douglasiana* close-up.

by **James Andre,** where he reported it ~22 miles to the west, near Clark Pass (CalPhotos); the two photos appear as similar as if taken from the same spot. That same year and month (Mar. 2005), **Craig Dremann**, owner of a seed company in Redwood City, reported on his website (*http://www.ecoseeds.com/mustards.html*) an *"infestation"* of Sahara mustard in Jawbone Canyon. He added that *"the Sahara mustard plants stop where vehicles stop, and the Sahara mustard plants go up slopes where the vehicles go;"* the mucilaginous seeds of Sahara mustard easily stick to the tires of vehicles,[3] and as many 16,554 seeds may be produced by one plant.[4] Thus, it would seem that at least three independent observers were struck by the mustard invasion to the extent that they had to photograph and report it. Prior to 2005, only one occurrence of the species was reported in Kern County, at a guard station on Edwards Air Force Base in the southeastern corner of the county (**Consortium of California Herbaria**).

Monolopia lanceolata, Carrizo Plain, San Luis Obispo Co., April 15, 2017.

Photos by Rich Spiutt

Sierra tidy tips — Top Row: *Layia pentachaeta* var. *albida* (white flowers) east of Buttonwillow near I-5, March 23, 2010. **Bottom Row:** *Layia* var. *pentachaeta* (yellow flowers), Kern River Canyon, Apr 23, 2003. In the spring of 2005, hillsides in Kern River Canyon were covered with *Pholistoma membranaceum(white fiesta flower)*, not shown, an abundance of which I have not seen elsewhere.

What might one have expecedt to see if the Sahara mustard had not been there? Out of curiosity, I looked at **Calflora's "What Grows Here**." The Clark Pass location reported more annual species than at the Iron Mountains location, with varying results depending on whether or not I drew a polygon, but certainly more than just the *Oenothera*. Examples of common species in these areas that should be evident are blue, to purple *Phacelia crenulata, P. distans*, yellow *Camissonia* spp., white *Chylismia* spp., *Dithyrea californica* and others. The year 2005 was exceptional desert bloom, a once-in-a-century occurence some said, and not to see these and other natives at the mustard sites was also troublesome. Surprisingly, creosote — the most common shrub seen along Highway 62 — was rarely reported, probably because the species is so common that no one bothers to photograph or report it each time they see it.

Sinapis arvensis, a nonnative mustard forming a dense yellow mass in the northern Temblor Range, April 23, 2010, with fiddleneck in the understory.

Annuals at these sites, of course, do not all appear at the same time, and in some years,

natives may dominate more than invasive species. In Kern County, most years we see masses (alliances) of fiddlenecks, occasionally Sierra tidy tips, the white variety (*Layia pentachaeta* var. *albida*), and/or the typical yellow-to-orange variety. In 2017, *Monolopia* was exceptionally abundant in the Carrizo Plain. A nonnative mustard, *Sinapis arvensis* (charlock), has almost the same color as *Monolopia* when seen from at a distance.

Top: *Lasthenia minor*, hidden among grasses at **Pixley National Wildlife Refuge** but not at **Semi-tropic Ecological Reserve** (bottom). The conspicuous shrub is *Atriplex spinifera*. Both photos taken April 2, 2011.

Native blooms depend not only on fall-winter rain but also whenever rain occurs, as observed on a San Joaquin Valley field trip in the to **Semitropic Ecological Preserve** and **Pixley National Wildlife Refuge**, led by **Pam Williams** and **Steve Laymon**, April 2, 2011. As I recall hearing from our field trip leaders, an October rain gave nonnative grasses a head start at Pixley, resulting in a poor showing of native annuals. Wildflowers there were hidden among the nonnative bromes and foxtails. where at At Semi-tropic, a December rain (which had also occurred at Pixley) was more advantageous for seeing wildflowers in abundance without the grasses. In 2018 we had winter rain, but it was still a poor year for bloom except at Red Rock Canyon State Park. Hopefully, this year will be better. ✿

References

1 Spjut, R. W. 2011. Decline in native annuals and increase in nonnative annuals in the California deserts. Pages 348–358 in Proceedings of the CNPS Conservation Conference: Strategies and Solutions, 17–19 Jan 2009, eds. J. W. Willoughby, B. K. Orr, K.A. Schierenbeck, and N. J. Jensen

2 The image was shown in a poster presented at the CNPS 2009 Conservation Conference, and published in the above Proceedings.

3 Minnich, R. A. 2008. California's Fading Wildflowers. Univ. Calif. Press, 344 p.

4 Trader, M. R., Brooks, M. L. and J. V. Draper. Seed production by the non-native *Brassica tournefortii* (Sahara mustard) along desert roadsides. Madroño 53: 313–320.

Chapter Meetings

upcoming TOPICS

Thursday, January 17, 2019 - 7 pm
Presenter: **Jon Hammond,** nature writer
Topic:*TBA*

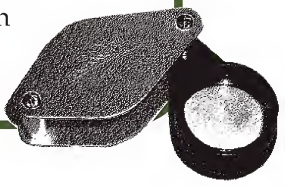
Thursday, February 21, 2019- 7 pm
Presenter: **Ann Howald**, botanist
Topic: *Flora of Mono County*

Thursday, March 21, 2019 - 7 pm
Presenter: Julie Evens, CNPS (tentative)
Topic: *Vegetation Mapping*

Thursday, April 18, 2019 - 7 pm
Presenter: **Camdilla Wirth**, biologist **Sequoia Riverlands Trust**
Topic: *The Carrizo Plain*

All chapter meetings are held the **3rd Thursday** of each month usually at 1300 17th Street, Room 1A or 1B, Bakersfield, CA. Check website for any change of venue.

Meeting times:
6 pm — Discussion groups on plant identification and native plant gardening
7 pm — Program presentation



California Native Plant Society

CNPS is the leader for providing reliable information on California native plants and plant conservation. Comprehensive information about California's flora and vegetation communities is available throughout the state for conservation and educational purposes. CNPS's leadership influences personal ethics and actions, as well as public policy for native plant protection.

Mary Foster DeDecker (1909-2000): Botanist, Environmentalist, Author, Mentor, Mother...and More

by Nancy Nies

Part One

IF YOU'VE TAKEN THE SPECTACULAR DRIVE up Highway 395 along the east side of California's Sierra Nevada, you may have stopped in the little town of Independence to visit the Eastern Sierra Museum. While there you may have strolled through the **Mary DeDecker Native Plant Garden**, named for a remarkable woman who became, according to the Bristlecone chapter of CNPS, "*the undisputed authority on the flora of the eastern Sierra and northern Mojave.*"

Paul and I had visited the garden and learned something about Mary from the informational panels at its entrance. We found that she had, in the course of a half-century, collected 6,500 plant specimens; that she had pressed, dried and mounted thousands of them; and that she had assembled an outstanding private herbarium. We discovered that her name is now associated with two rare native plants, *Dedeckera eurekensis* ("**July gold**," as Mary named the yellow-flowered shrub she discovered in the foothills east of the Eureka Dunes, its type locality later given the name **DeDeckera Canyon**) and *Lupinus padre-crowleyi* (**DeDecker's lupine**), found in the mountains west of Big Pine. We also learned that Mary and her daughters had given many local wildflowers their common names.

The Bristlecone chapter's memorial tribute to Mary

Photo by Drew Kaiser, Wikimedia Commons

DeDeckera eurekensis (July gold), 13 June 2011

mentions a third plant named for her, *Trifolium macilentum var. dedeckerae*, also known as **DeDecker's clover**. It also credits her with the first discoveries of the endangered *Astragalus lentiginosus var. piscinensis* (**Fish Slough milk-vetch**), endemic to a desert wetland north of Bishop, as well as the plants then known as *Astragalus ravenii* and *Lomatium inyoense*.

Mary's Daughters Remember

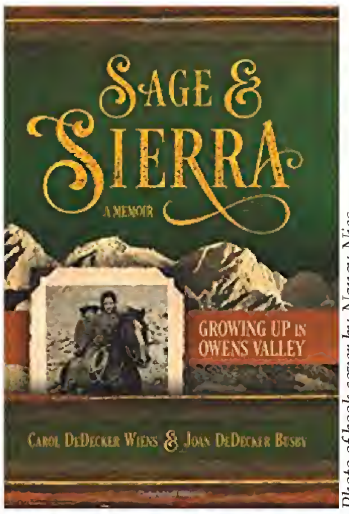


Photo of book cover by Nancy Nies

Mary's daughters' memoir, published in 2017

In June 2017 we participated in a CNPS field trip in the Inyo Mountains, organized by the Bristlecone chapter. As the group gathered that morning at the meeting place, we struck up a conversation with a couple that had come all the way from their home in Idaho for the occasion, **Del** and **Carol Wiens**. Del, we learned, was an expert on mistletoes, and would be educating us on the subject that day, in the Whipoorwill Flat area. We also learned that Carol was one of Mary DeDecker's two daughters, and that she and her sister **Joan** had just written a memoir about growing up in the Owens Valley. At the time we spoke with Carol, the book was at the editing stage.

In August 2018 I was excited to find the finished product (**Sage & Sierra: Growing Up in the Owens Valley** by **Joan DeDecker Busby** and **Carol DeDecker Wiens**, 2017) for sale at both the **Eastern Sierra InterAgency Visitor Center** in Lone Pine and the **Eastern Sierra Museum** in Independence. I purchased a copy and began reading, immediately transported to the small town of Independence as it was in the 1930s. There, I would meet the DeDecker family and accompany Joan and Carol on their journey from early childhood to young adulthood.

Germination

The Bristlecone chapter's tribute offers some details on Mary's childhood and youth. Her family had moved from Oklahoma to California when she was eight years old. Mary's father encouraged her interest in botany when she was young, helping her to grow and identify plants. In high school, her favorite subjects were math and science, and she was put in charge of student plant-collecting for term projects. Though for a time she attended UCLA as an art major, the Depression brought an end to her formal education. In 1929 she married **Paul DeDecker**, and the couple began their life together in the San Fernando Valley, where their daughters were born . . . and where Mary began to study the local native plants.

Putting Down Roots

In 1935, when jobs were scarce, Paul found work in Independence, precipitating the DeDeckers' move to the remote eastern Sierra town. Employed as a truck driver for the **Los Angeles Department of Water and Power**, Paul hauled materials and transported workers for the construction of the **Mono Basin Aqueduct**. Mary and Paul anticipated staying just a couple of years in Independence, but ended up spending the rest of their lives there. The move was to prove life-changing for the whole family. Mary and Paul, as well as their daughters, would develop a connection with nature that would give them an unusual and enduring perspective on the world.

When the DeDecker family arrived in Independence, daughter Joan was three years old and her sister Carol, two. It was not until many years later that the DeDecker daughters would realize how fortunate they had been to grow up when and where they did, with parents who allowed them to explore. As Carol writes in **Sage & Sierra's** preface, "*Home extended from the valley floor to the snow-capped peaks of the Sierra and to the crest of the Inyo Mountains. Home was the morning sun on Mt. Williamson, the smell of rain on sagebrush, and the murmur of Independence Creek as it flowed through our back yard.*"

Photo of photo by Nancy Nies

Paul and Mary DeDecker, 1929

We learn from Joan and Carol that their mother, from her first days in Independence, was enthralled by the beauty of the nearby mountains and by the plants that grew in the eastern Sierra and northern Mojave. Daughter Joan shares what her mother wrote in her diary on the family's first night in Independence: "*Expect to stay two or three years and hope to gain much in health, pleasure and experience.*" Joan adds that Mary's life with Paul in Independence over the next 65 years would far exceed her expectations. ✿

To be continued in the **March** issue . . .
(In **Part Two: Budding Botanist; In Full Flower; A Perennial Legacy**)

Thank You to:

... **Kathryn Prince**, for her engaging and informative presentation on attracting pollinators in our southern valley area.

... **Cynthia Powell**, from **Calflora** for teaching us about new Calflora tools and how to get the most out of old ones.

... **Denis Kearns**, for not only an overview of New Mexico vegetation, but also for information on the history and demographics of that state.

--- **Elyse Goin**, for creatng our chapter's Facebook page and making it beautiful, informational and relevant. ✿

Rich Spjut Lauded for Contributions to Calflora

by Paul Gipe

KERN CNPS PRESIDENT **RICH SPJUT** HAS been lauded by **Calflora**, the state-wide botanical website and database, for his contributions. Calflora's executive director **Cynthia Powell** says Spjut is a "*prolific photographer*" of native plants who has donated his expertise by uploading photos and their scientific descriptions to the web-site.

Photo by Rich Spjut

Psorothamnus arborescens var. *minutifolius* (little-leaved Mojave indigo bush)

Calflora is used by both botanists and amateurs to identify plants in the state. Photographs are particularly helpful to amateurs who find scientific keys difficult to use.

Spjut, a professional botanist, has been collecting plants used for pharmacological screening in cancer research since 1972.

He has posted entries for 30 different species to the Calflora database. For most of these, Spjut's photos appear on the title page describing the species' key characteristics. Spjut's photo of *Psorothamnus arborescens* var. *minutifolius* (little-leaved Mojave indigo bush) was taken on a Kern CNPS field trip he led to Short Canyon in the spring of 2016. ✿

FIELD TRIPS

by Patty Gradek with Rich Spjut

KERN CNPS FIELD TRIPS ARE OPEN TO ALL. Occasionally, numbers will be limited by the land owners or agencies. We welcome you to join us to see and learn about our native plants and their habitats, to learn to identify plants, or to photograph them. If you are skilled in plant identification, you can help us all learn.

Please always dress in layers, wear boots or shoes you can hike in, and bring food and water. You may also want to bring a hat, sunscreen, binoculars, camera, plant lists and useful references such as Kern County Flora and the Jepson Manual, or any book you like. We try to meet at a spot where we can park some cars and carpool to our location to save the air, gas, money and make sure that we will have adequate space to park. CNPS does not arrange car pools; each person does so at the meeting place. If you ride with another driver, please remember to offer to help pay for gas.

All trips are by reservation only, so we know whom to expect, and how many will be participating in each field trip. Each trip will have the contact person listed. Please email the contact person by four days before the field trip and indicate the names of those who will attend. Please also provide a cell-phone number, in case we need to reach you that day, and indicate whether you will be driving a four-wheel-drive, AWD or high-clearance vehicle. We may need to limit participation for some trips if we don't have an adequate number of four-wheel-drive, AWD or high-clearance vehicles for all the participants.

IMPORTANT: **If your plans or your party's plans change and you will not be attending, it is critical — for safety, planning and courtesy reasons — that you call or email the contact person and let them know you will not be there.**

March 16, Saturday

DESERT TORTOISE RESEARCH NATURAL AREA
with **Lucy Clark** and **Jill Estrada**
Contact: **Lucy Clark** – *lucyg391@gmail.com*
RSVP Deadline: **8 pm, Tuesday, March 12**

We have been invited to join the Preserve Manager and volunteers of the **Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee** for their work day at the Natural Area on **March 16th**. The focus for this work day is to remove invasive species from selected areas. They are excited to have CNPS members participate in this important project. The Committee provides a potluck lunch. Please bring something to share with the group. In the afternoon we will drive to nearby areas to observe desert wildflower blooms.

Please RSVP to Lucy at *lucy391@gmail.com* by **March 12** at **8 pm.** Those who RSVP will be given the location to meet the morning of **March 16** and the meeting time. We will likely be leaving the meeting location about **7:30 am**. Plan on this being a full day. Lucy will RSVP to the **Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee** for all attending with/from CNPS.

Bring your food to share, water, drinks, hat and sunscreen, dress in layers, and wear long pants. Wear boots if you have them. There are restrooms as we enter California City in the morning and we will stop again on our way home. There are beautiful long views, friendly people from the **Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee**, a good chance of seeing abundant desert wildflowers, and a great potluck lunch!

Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc.

March 30, Saturday

KERN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
With **Geoff Grisdale**
Contact: **Fred Chynoweth** - *rdnmnt18@gmail.com*
RSVP Deadline: **8 pm, Tuesday, March 26**

Geoff Grisdale, Wildlife Biologist with the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**, will take us on a tour of the **Kern National Wildlife Refuge**. The Refuge includes a **Desert Research Natural Area** for endangered Tipton kangaroo rats, San Joaquin kit fox and blunt-nosed leopard lizards. We're expecting to see good wildflower displays at that time.

We will meet at the BLM parking lot at **3801 Pegasus Drive** at **7:45 am** and will form carpools. We will leave by **8:00 am** and arrive at the Refuge around 8:30am. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is limiting this trip to **15 people**.

If you would like to attend, RSVP to **Fred Chynoweth** at *rdnmnt18@gmail.com* by **March 26** at **8 pm**. Let Fred know what vehicle you will be driving since we would like to have a couple of larger vehicles to transport people from the headquarters to wildflower destinations. Restrooms are available at the Refuge headquarters. Bring your lunch, water, sunhat, and sunscreen, and wear boots. There may be wet areas to walk through. We will leave the Refuge about **12:30 pm** and arrive back at the BLM parking lot by **1:00 pm**. ✿

Conservation Corner: Tidbits

by Fred Chynoweth

THE BAKERSFIELD CACTUS (*OPUNTIA basilaris*) that we planted last January on property managed by the **Nature Conservancy** are doing well. A group has been watering and monitoring throughout the year. Only 3 out of 125 did not make it. At last count, all but 16% have added pads (and some fallen pads have taken root).

Several members from this chapter attended a meeting in Ridgecrest or Lancaster, sponsored by **Department of Parks and Recreation** regarding the **Red Rock Canyon State Park General Plan Revision** process. Thanks go to **Clyde Golden**, **Lucy Clark**, **Richard Spjut**, **Deb See** and **Bill Moffat**, who represented us. Members contributed comments, both oral and written. **Richard Spjut** drafted the comment letter on behalf of the Kern Chapter.

The **Important Plant Area (IPA)** project, which began in Bakersfield, is scheduled for review this month and should be available to chapters early in 2019.

CNPS headquarters is also heavily involved in working with state organizations and other non-profits in areas impacting climate change, including carbon sequestration and forest management.

It is hoped that our chapter can help support **The Southern California Conservation Analyst (SCCA)** position. The position was formed last year and is being partially funded by the **Elizabeth C. Schwartz Fund for Southern California Conservation**. The goal is to fund the SCCA *perpetually*, through donations and other fundraising efforts. **Nick Jensen** currently fills this position and represents our chapter.

Effective conservation advocacy requires networking with other groups as well as aiding local chapters. Nick has also spent a good deal of time working to craft our response to a whole host of large threats to California's flora as well as local issues. He is the lead CNPS representative on issues that span numerous chapters. Some of the larger projects he continues to work on include the:

- **Paradise Valley Specific Plan** – A proposal to build 8,490 homes and more than a million square feet of commercial development on approximately 2,000 acres of desert habitat in Riverside County.
- **Centennial Specific Plan** - The proposal to build 19,333 homes and millions of square feet of commercial development on nearly 6,000 acres in northwestern Los Angeles County on **Tejon Ranch**. We have many, many issues with this project, not the least of which is the potential loss of thousands of acres of native grassland.
- **WEMO** – BLM's proposal to designate more than 6,000 miles of OHV routes in the **Western Mojave Desert**.
- **DRECP (Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan)** – Conservation issues related to renewable energy development in the California desert. Our efforts have focused on defending the DRECP from attack of byTrump Administration and the limited number of projects that are being implemented under pre-DRECP rules.

Nick has written comments on smaller issues that pose a threat at the local level, including the **Los Padres NF Logging NOP**, **BLM Fracking-Bakersfield NOP**, **Red Rock Canyon State Park General Plan Update NOP**, and the **Desert Quartzite Solar Project FEIR**. ✿

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The Kern Chapter of the

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

California Native Plant Society meets the third Thursday of each month at:
Kern County Superintendent of Schools
City Centre, Room 1A or 1B
1300 17th Street, Bakersfield, CA.
Chapter website: kern.cnps.org

The California Native Plant Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of California native plants and their natural habitats, and to increasing the understanding, appreciation, and horticultural use of native plants. CNPS has 31 chapters throughout the state and membership is open to all persons — professional and amateur — with an interest in California's native plants. Members have diverse interests including natural history, botany, ecology, conservation, photography, drawing, hiking and gardening. As a Kern County resident, your membership includes Fremontia, *a quarterly journal with articles on all aspects of native plants; the* Bulletin, *a statewide report of activities and schedules; and* The Mimulus Memo, *the newsletter of the Kern Chapter.*

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